

NMFS ATLANTIC TUNAS PROGRAM

SUMMARY OF FISHERY INFORMATION AND REGULATIONS FOR ATLANTIC TUNA FISHERIES

MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

Atlantic tunas are managed under the dual authority of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act) and the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act (ATCA). ATCA authorizes the Secretary of Commerce to implement the binding recommendations of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT). The authority to manage the U.S. Atlantic tuna fisheries is delegated to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Management Division.

REGULATED SPECIES

Tunas subject to regulation are Atlantic bluefin tuna (BFT) (*Thunnus thynnus*), as well as "BAYS" tunas, i.e., bigeye tuna (BET) (*Thunnus obesus*), albacore tuna (ALB) (*Thunnus alalunga*), yellowfin tuna (YFT) (*Thunnus albacares*), and skipjack tuna (SKJ) (*Katsuwonus pelamis*).

MANAGEMENT AREA

These regulations apply in all waters of the Atlantic Ocean, including the Gulf of Mexico and Caribbean Sea.

OVERVIEW OF BFT DOMESTIC QUOTAS

Effective September 26, 2015 and until changed, the baseline annual (January 1-December 31) quota is 1,058.79 metric tons (mt)*, with baseline subquotas as follows:

	mt		mt		mt
General	466.7	Purse Seine	184.3	Longline	148.3
Harpoon	38.6	Angling	195.2	Trap	1.0
Reserve	24.8				

(Reserve for inseason adjustments, fishery research, and other domestic management objectives)

The following subquotas have been adjusted, for 2015 only, as follows (as of August 31, 2015):

	mt		mt
Purse Seine	82.9	Harpoon	78.6
Longline	182.3*	Reserve	147.1

*(does not include 25 mt set-aside for bycatch of BFT related to directed pelagic longline fisheries for other species in the Northeast Distant gear restricted area (NED))

For inseason fishery notices (retention limit adjustments, closures, etc.), visit hmspermits.noaa.gov, or call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (978) 281-9260.

PERMIT PROGRAM

All owners/operators of vessels (commercial, charter/headboat, or recreational) fishing for regulated Atlantic tunas in the management area must obtain an Atlantic tunas or Atlantic HMS vessel permit. Atlantic tunas permits are issued in five commercial categories: General, Harpoon, Purse Seine, Longline, and Trap. Atlantic HMS permits are issued in two categories: Recreational Angling and Charter/Headboat. Only one permit category may be assigned to a vessel.

Permit holders may not change permit category after 45 days from the date of permit issuance.

While persons aboard a vessel with an HMS Charter/Headboat permit are fishing for or are in possession of Atlantic HMS, the vessel operator must have a valid Merchant Marine License or Uninspected Passenger Vessel License, issued by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Atlantic tunas may be sold only by fishermen permitted in commercial categories and only to permitted dealers. Atlantic tunas taken aboard Angling category vessels may not be sold. All fish dealers purchasing regulated Atlantic tunas from vessels holding an Atlantic tunas permit or an Atlantic HMS vessel permit must obtain an Atlantic tunas dealer permit. An International Trade Permit is required for the international trade of fresh or frozen Atlantic or Pacific bluefin tuna, southern bluefin tuna, swordfish, and/or frozen bigeye tuna.

NMFS maintains an automated permitting system for the issuance of Atlantic tunas and HMS vessel permits. To apply for or renew an Atlantic tunas or HMS vessel permit, visit hmspermits.noaa.gov or dial (888) 872-8862.

Customer Service for the Automated Permitting System can be reached by pressing "0" from the main menu.

For an Atlantic tunas dealer permit, call the NMFS Greater Atlantic Permit Office at (978) 281-9370.

For an International Trade Permit, call the NMFS Southeast Permit Office at (727) 824-5326, or visit:

<http://nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/ITP>.

LARGE PELAGICS SURVEY

NMFS collects data on fishing effort and catch for BFT and other pelagic fishes through the Large Pelagics Survey (LPS). Through telephone interviews (biweekly for private vessels and weekly for charter vessels), NMFS obtains information about fishing activity directed at large pelagic fishes. Captains are selected randomly from the permit list and may be contacted more than once during the fishing season. The telephone survey includes only questions about the number of fishing trips for the previous 2 weeks (1 week for charter vessels). In addition, field surveys collect biological samples and catch data for estimating annual catches of tunas and other large pelagic fishes.

Collection of information about recreational catch of Atlantic tunas is essential for stock assessments and reports to ICCAT. Cooperation with LPS dockside and telephone interviewers is required under the authority of ATCA. Note that the LPS will be used as independent validation of the Automated Catch Reporting System for BFT, thus a small degree of duplication is unavoidable. See the last page of this brochure for further information.

This brochure was produced August 2015, in compliance with section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.

INDIVIDUAL CATEGORY INFORMATION

All fishing for any species must cease and the vessel must immediately return to port to offload when the large medium or giant BFT (>73") daily retention limit is retained or possessed under regulations pertaining to the General, HMS Charter/Headboat, and HMS Angling category fisheries, as applicable. In the case of multi-day trips, the daily limit applies and may not be exceeded at any point during the trip.

DIRECTED FISHING FOR BFT IN THE GULF OF MEXICO IS PROHIBITED. Landing BFT > 73" is allowed in the Gulf of Mexico only under the HMS Angling category "trophy" and Longline category retention limits.

Authorized gear for Atlantic tunas: Rod and reel (including downriggers), handline, green-stick gear, speargun (recreational only and only for tunas other than BFT), harpoon, bandit gear, longlines, traps (pound nets and fish weirs), and purse seines. Gear type restrictions for BFT are specified below.

VESSEL REPORTING: See shaded box on last page for reporting requirements of General, Harpoon, HMS Charter/Headboat, and HMS Angling category permit holders.

GENERAL CATEGORY			
Status:	Commercial		
Gear Type:	Rod and Reel (including downriggers), handline, harpoon, bandit gear, and green-stick		
Description:	Vessel owners who harvest Atlantic tunas, including large medium and giant BFT, by handgear and plan to sell the tuna must obtain a permit in the General category. General category-permitted vessels are eligible to sell large medium and giant BFT. These BFT will be counted against the General category quota.		
Tournaments:	General category vessels may participate in registered recreational HMS fishing tournaments. Recreational size/retention limits apply for sharks swordfish and billfish. General category size/retention limits apply to regulated Atlantic tunas.		
2015 Season:	Opens: January 1 Closes: March 31, or when BFT time-period subquota met Re-opens: June 1 Closes: December 31, or when BFT quota met		
Retention Limits:	No more than the daily retention limit may be on board a vessel		
BFT:	<u>Size class:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young School School Large School Small Medium 	<u>Limit:</u> } Prohibited	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large Medium/Giant 	Check hmspermits.noaa.gov or information line for current limits.	
Baseline Subquotas (mt):	<u>Months</u> January June-August September Oct – Nov December	<u>Percentage</u> 5.3 50 26.5 13 5.2	<u>Quota</u> 24.7 233.3 123.7 60.7 24.3
YFT	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL		No limit
BET	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL		No limit
ALB	No minimum size		No limit
SKJ	No minimum size		No limit

HARPOON		
Status:	Commercial	
Gear Type:	Harpoon	
Description:	Vessel owner/operators who exclusively use harpoons for Atlantic tunas, including large medium and giant BFT, must obtain a permit in the Harpoon category. Vessels permitted in the Harpoon category may not participate in the General category fishery.	
2015 Season:	Opens: June 1 Closes: November 15	
BFT Retention Limits:	<u>Size class:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young School School Large School Small Medium 	<u>Limit:</u> } Prohibited
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large Medium Giant 	2/vessel/day* No limit
YFT & BET	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL	No limit
ALB & SKJ	No minimum size	No limit

HMS ANGLING CATEGORY			
Status:	Recreational (no sale)		
Gear Type:	Rod and Reel (including downriggers), handlines, and speargun (for tunas other than BFT)		
Description:	Private recreational vessel owners who harvest Atlantic tunas must obtain a permit in the HMS Angling category. Young school BFT (< 27") may not be retained and must be released immediately. Permit holders in this category may retain only one large medium or giant “trophy” BFT per fishing year.		
2015 Season:	Opens: January 1 Closes: December 31, or when quota is met		
Retention Limits:	No more than the daily retention limit and the annual “trophy” retention limit may be on board a vessel		
BFT:	<u>Size class</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young School• School• Large School• Small Medium• Large Medium/ Giant	<u>Limit</u> Prohibited Check hmspermits.noaa.gov or information line for current limits. 1 “trophy” BFT/vessel/year (SOUTH CLOSED June 7, 2015)	
Baseline Area Subquotas (mt):	<u>School</u> North 41.7 South 46.6 GOM N/A Reserve 20.1 Total 108.4	<u>Large School/ Small Medium</u> 38.9 43.5 N/A N/A 82.3	<u>Large Medium/Giant</u> 1.5 1.5 1.5 N/A 4.5
YFT	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL	3/person/day (includes Capt. & Mates)	
BET	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL	No limit	
ALB & SKJ	No minimum size	No limit	
Detail regarding Angling category subquota areas North = north of 39°18'N (Great Egg Inlet, NJ and north) South = south of 39°18'N (Great Egg Inlet, NJ and south) GOM = Gulf of Mexico			

HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT CATEGORY		
Status:	Commercial and Recreational (Vessels are eligible to participate in the General and HMS Angling category quotas)	
Gear Type:	Rod and Reel (including downriggers), handlines, bandit gear, green-stick, and speargun (recreational only, for tunas other than BFT) (HARPOONS NOT AUTHORIZED)	
Description:	Any vessel that carries passengers for hire must obtain a permit in the HMS Charter/Headboat category. Anglers aboard vessels permitted in this category may collectively fish under either the daily HMS Angling <u>or</u> General category limit as applicable on that day. The size category of the first BFT retained or possessed will determine the fishing category of all persons aboard the vessel for that day, and the applicable catch limits.	
2015 Season:	Opened: January 1 Closes: December 31, or when quota is met (no sale of BFT if landed under the “trophy” allowance)	
Retention Limits:	No more than the General category OR Angling category daily retention limit may be on board a vessel	
BFT:	<u>Size class</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young School • School • Large School/Small Medium • Large Medium/Giant 	<u>Limit</u> Prohibited <hr/> Check hmspermits.noaa.gov or information line for current limits. <hr/> 1 “trophy” BFT/vessel/year (Recreational; note Southern Trophy fishery closed June 7, 2015); see General category for Commercial Limits.
YFT*	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL	Recreational: 3/person/day (includes Captain & mates) Commercial: No limit
BET	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL	No limit
ALB & SKJ	No minimum size	No limit
*The recreational YFT retention limit applies to Charter/Headboat vessels only when the vessel is engaged in a for-hire trip (i.e., paying passenger on board or 4 or more people on board)		

TRAP CATEGORY		
Status:	Commercial	
Gear Type:	Pound net, fish weir	
Description:	Owners of vessels conducting trap operations that may result in the incidental taking of large medium and giant BFT must obtain a Trap category permit.	
2015 Season:	Opens: January 1 Closes: December 31, or when quota met	
BFT Retention Limits:	<u>Size class:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young School • School • Large School • Small Medium • Large Medium/Giant 	<u>Limit:</u> } Prohibited <hr/> 1/vessel/year
No Atlantic tunas other than BFT taken incidentally may be retained		

LONGLINE CATEGORY		
Status:	Commercial (Limited Access)	
Gear Type:	Longline (pelagic/bottom) and green-stick	
Description:	Owners of vessels conducting longline operations for Atlantic tunas, including the incidental take of large medium and giant BFT, must obtain a Longline category permit. Further information regarding regulations applicable to Longline category vessels is available at: http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/guides/index.html	
YFT & BET	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL	No limit
ALB & SKJ	No minimum size	No limit

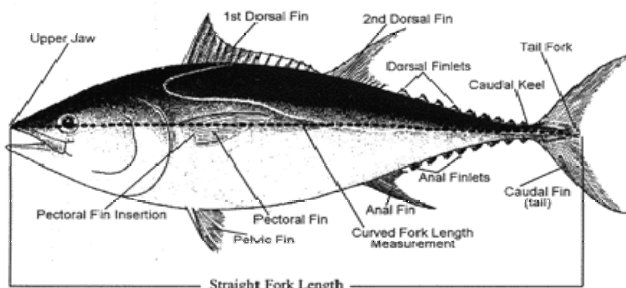
PURSE SEINE CATEGORY		
Status:	Commercial (Limited Access)	
Gear Type:	Purse seine nets	
Description:	Owners of vessels conducting purse seine operations for Atlantic tunas, must obtain a Purse Seine category permit	
2015 Season:	Opens: July 6 for BFT (NMFS announces start date annually) January 1 for other tunas Closes: December 31	
BFT Retention Limits:	<u>Size class:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young School • School • Large School • Small Medium • Large Medium • Giant 	<u>Limit:</u> 1% by weight (incidental) of SKJ and YFT landed on that trip* <hr/> Allocated per vessel for the season**
*No sale of these BFT– counted against vessel allocation **Large Medium BFT catch may not exceed 15% by weight of total amount of giant BFT landed per fishing year		
YFT & BET	Greater than or equal to 27" CFL	No limit
ALB & SKJ	No minimum size	No limit

Transfer at sea of Atlantic tunas is prohibited. “Transfer” includes, but is not limited to, moving or attempting to move an Atlantic tuna that is on fishing or other gear in the water from one vessel to another vessel. Exception: An auxiliary vessel (i.e., a skiff) associated with a permitted Purse Seine category vessel may assist in routine purse seine fishery operations.

LANDINGS INFORMATION

CURVED FORK LENGTH (CFL) MEASUREMENT

For enforcement purposes, total curved fork length is the sole criterion for determining the size class of whole (with head) Atlantic tunas. Measurements must be taken in a line, tracing the contour of the body from the tip of the upper jaw to the fork of the tail, which abuts the dorsal insertion of the pectoral fin and the dorsal side of the caudal keel. Measurements must be taken from the dorsal insertion of the pectoral fin, tracing the contour of the body, to the fork of the tail. **THE TAPE MUST TOUCH THE TOP PORTION OF THE PECTORAL FIN.**



LANDING FORM

Atlantic tunas may be landed round with fins intact, or eviscerated with the head removed, but with one pectoral fin and the tail remaining attached. The upper and lower lobes of the tuna tail may be removed for storage purposes as long as the fork of the tail remains intact.

For tunas with heads removed, pectoral fin curved fork length (PFCFL) must be taken. For BFT, the conversion factor to obtain total curved fork length is 1.35, i.e., $PFCFL \times 1.35 = \text{total curved fork length}$. No person may retain or possess a BFT with the head removed that is less than 20 inches, PFCFL.

The minimum size for yellowfin and bigeye tuna is 27 inches curved fork length. No person may remove the head of a bigeye tuna or yellowfin tuna if the remaining portion would be less than 27 inches from the fork of the tail to the forward edge of the cut.

If sold, the landings of large medium and giant BFT must be reported by a licensed dealer on landing cards faxed to the NMFS Greater Atlantic Regional Office. BFT not sold by commercial permit holders must be reported to the nearest NMFS Enforcement office upon landing.

SIZE CLASS CATEGORIES OF BFT

Size Class	Curved Fork Length	Pectoral Fin Curved Fork Length	Approx. Round Weight
Young School	< 27 "	< 20 "	< 14 lbs
School	27 - < 47"	20 - < 35"	14 - < 66 lbs
Large School	47 - < 59"	35 - < 44"	66 - < 135 lbs
Small Medium	59 - < 73"	44 - < 54"	135 - < 235 lbs
Large Medium	73 - < 81"	54 - < 60"	235 - < 310 lbs
Giant	81" or >	60" or >	310 lbs or >

Since fishery rules are subject to change, fishermen must familiarize themselves with the latest regulations (via hmspermits.noaa.gov or the Atlantic Tunas Information Line). Fishermen are responsible for complying with current official regulations.

ADDRESS & TELEPHONE INFORMATION

NMFS maintains a 24-hour Information Line for news concerning Atlantic tunas. The Information Line, which is updated as necessary Monday through Friday, announces closure notices, inseason quota adjustments, and updates of commercial landings for BFT. This information is also available on the website.

For inseason fishery notices (retention limit adjustments, closures, etc.), visit hmspermits.noaa.gov, or call the Atlantic Tunas Information Line at (978) 281-9260. To sign up for Atlantic HMS News, an electronic newsletter of the latest Atlantic HMS related actions from NMFS, visit www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/news/news_list/.

For further information concerning the Atlantic tuna fisheries, contact:

National Marine Fisheries Service
Highly Migratory Species Management Division
55 Great Republic Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930
phone: (978) 281-9260 fax: (978) 281-9340

Other important phone numbers:

Cooperative Tagging Program (800) 437-3936
(To obtain a tagging kit or report a tag recovery)

NMFS Enforcement Offices

Ellsworth, ME (207) 664-0508	Morehead City, NC (252) 726-0314
Portland, ME (207) 780-3241	Charleston, SC (843) 554-9896
Portsmouth, NH (603) 436-3186x224	Port Orange, FL (386) 492-6686
Gloucester, MA (978) 281-9213	Miami, FL (954) 746-4160
Boston, MA (617) 565-1800	Marathon, FL (305) 743-3110
New Bedford, MA (508) 992-7711	St. Petersburg, FL (727) 824-5344
Woods Hole, MA (508) 495-2147	Niceville, FL (850) 729-8628
Bellport, NY (631) 776-1734	Slidell, LA (985) 643-6232
Wall, NJ (732) 280-6490	Galveston, TX (832) 689-9174
Marmora, NJ (609) 390-8303	Harlingen, TX (956) 423-3450
Ocean City, MD (410) 629-1258	Aguadilla, PR (787) 508-5403
Newport News, VA (757) 595-2692	

Enforcement Hotlines

The NMFS Office of Enforcement maintains a 24-hour hotline for the public to report potential violations of Atlantic tunas regulations. This number should be used only to report potential violations, not for general information, concerning Atlantic tunas. NMFS Enforcement Hotline: (800) 853-1964

Coast Guard Hotline: (800) SAVE-FISH

Coast Guard Regulations

Commercial vessels are subject to the Fishing Vessel Safety Act of 1988. For information, contact your local Coast Guard office:

Maine to New York	(617) 223-8315
New Jersey to North Carolina	(757) 398-6554
South Carolina to Florida	(305) 415-6868
Gulf of Mexico	(504) 589-4554

Atlantic Tunas General, Harpoon, and HMS Charter/Headboat permit holders are required to report their commercially catch of Atlantic bluefin tuna (landed and released (alive or dead)). HMS Angling and HMS Charter/Headboat permit holders are required to report their recreational catch of bluefin tuna (landed or discarded dead). All reports must be made through the Automated Catch Reporting System at hmspermits.noaa.gov or (888) 872-8862, with 24 hours of landings/end of trip.

NOTE - Maryland and North Carolina vessel owners should report their recreational bluefin tuna, landings at state-operated reporting stations and not through this system. For NC reporting station locations, call (800) 338-7804. For MD reporting station locations, call (410) 213-1531.